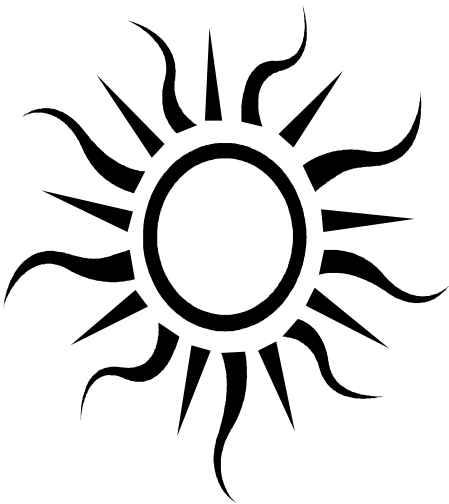


Department of Human Services

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Published October 28, 2006

Lisa Holland guilty

Asst. prosecutor on gruesome case: 'I will carry this one for a long time'

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

The verdict decided, her wrists shackled behind her back, Lisa Holland struggled to wipe away tears with a shoulder.

A horrifying case that began July 2, 2005, was over.

Holland was found guilty Friday in the death of her 7-year-old adopted son Ricky.

A jury of eight men and four women, who had been deliberating since Wednesday afternoon, found the 33-year-old Williamston woman guilty of both first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse.

She will be sentenced Nov. 28 to mandatory life in prison without the possibility of parole.

After the jury foreman read the verdict, a deputy immediately handcuffed Holland and led her from the courtroom. She had to be brought back to hear her sentencing date and was crying when she returned.

Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency called the case one of the most emotional of his 21-year career. "I will carry this one for a long time," he said.



(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)
Facing life in prison: Lisa Holland, 33, listens as a Lansing jury announces Friday two guilty verdicts against her in the July 2005 death of her adopted 7-year-old son Ricky.

What's next

- Lisa Holland, who was convicted Friday of first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse, will be sentenced Nov. 28 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.
- A sentencing hearing for her husband, Tim Holland, who pleaded guilty to second-degree murder, is scheduled for Nov. 15.
- Prosecutors have said they'll continue to investigate whether others could be charged in Ricky's death.
- Ricky's remains continue to be held by Ingham County authorities. It is not yet known when they will be released.

Related content from LSJ:

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- [Jurors say note by Lisa key to decision](#)
- [VIDEO: Jurors in Lisa Holland trial answer questions from the media \(10/27/06\)](#)
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Reflecting on the afternoon he and five detectives were led to Ricky's remains — left in a ditch, partially submerged in ice and water — Ferency said, "We're scarred for life."

Ricky was reported missing from his family's Williamston home on July 2, 2005, but testimony in the

six-week trial revealed he died the previous evening. He likely succumbed to a severe head injury inflicted the preceding week.

Lisa's husband, Tim Holland, on Jan. 27 led authorities to Ricky's badly decomposed remains in a marshlike area near Dansville.

Tim Holland, 37, already has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the case. He will be sentenced Nov. 15.

After the verdict, Ingham County Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth said he has no sympathy for a couple who killed their child.

"There should be a special place in hell for both Hollands," he said.

Tim's family satisfied

Tim Holland's nephew, Rodney Weston, who was in the courtroom with his mother and father for the verdict, said the family is satisfied with the outcome.

"If I had my wish, none of this would ever have happened, but since it did, then this was justice done," said Weston, a writer and editorial assistant for the State Journal. He added: "But by no means is this a joyful day."

Karen Reid, 40, a friend of Lisa Holland's family, said she was stunned by the verdict.

"It was based on the testimony of a pathological liar," Reid said about Tim Holland. "They tried her solely on his word."

Ingham County sheriff's Detective Lt. Roy Holliday, who coordinated and directed the investigation, said he has been haunted by the Hollands' "utter disregard for human life."

Holliday was one of the detectives Tim Holland led to the scene where the boy was found. The fact that Ricky's remains were left to rot in a ditch, he said, "is one of those things that will always be etched in my mind."

Ingham County sheriff's Detective Mark Bowser noted the Hollands held a formal ceremony to bury a dog in the backyard but essentially threw away their son.

"They buried the dog, but Ricky gets a ditch on the side of the road," he said.

Verdict 'crushing'

Lisa Holland's co-counsel Mike Nichols called the verdict "crushing." He said the prosecution's case, which included more than 50 witnesses and 312 exhibits, was likely too much to overcome for the jury.

Co-counsel Andrew Abood agreed.

"Any time you have a government and a community that puts forth this much effort against one person, it's difficult to overcome," he said, adding an appeal is possible.

Nichols said he hopes the work put in over the past nine months helps his client in some way.

"You hope the effort (we) gave helps Lisa get through what she has to get through," he said.

Holliday keeps a photograph of Ricky in his planner. He said the smiling little boy was the investigators' motivation.

"Everyone else failed Ricky," he said. "We couldn't fail him."

Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Frank Mraz, one of the lead investigators, who interviewed Tim Holland the day he led authorities to Ricky's remains, said the case still lacks an explanation.

"There's no 'why this happened,'" he said.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

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Published October 28, 2006

Verdict met with relief, sorrow in Williamston

Residents angered over lies parents told to conceal murder

By Will Whelton
Lansing Community Newspapers

WILLIAMSTON - As news trickled throughout this community Friday of Lisa Holland's guilty verdict for murdering her adopted 7-year-old son Ricky, some residents let out a sigh of relief.

Lisa and Tim Holland lived in this small town of 3,400 people. Many people here joined the hundreds who gathered to look for Ricky when his parents lied and reported him missing in July 2005. It was the last town the boy called home.



(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal file photo)
Searching for Ricky: Volunteer searchers get their instructions in July 2005 during the search for Ricky Holland in Williamston.

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"Obviously, I didn't hear all of the evidence, but what little I did hear, it sounds like the verdict was probably justified," said Williamston Mayor Ken Zichi.

"I certainly hope it will bring closure. Unfortunately, no one wanted to see this happen - we all wanted to find Ricky, not have this. The community will get past this."

Lisa Holland's sentencing is set for Nov. 28; she faces mandatory life in prison.

Tim Holland in September pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in Ricky's death and agreed to testify against his wife. His sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 15.

Williamston was thrust into the spotlight by the search for the boy that included helicopters and national media. It hosted vigils and memorials when his body was found almost seven months later. And it held its collective breath as the six-week trial progressed and gruesome details of the boy's abuse came to light.

Kris Horstman said the guilty verdict was the outcome she expected and wanted.

"I'm not surprised the jury went that quickly," the Williamston resident said. "I wouldn't have been surprised if it only took an hour. This will be definite closure for the community."

Theresa Wood, co-owner of Wood & Sons, said the verdict was expected.

"I don't know what else could have been done," she said.

"Obviously, something happened to somebody in that house. How could you not be guilty? And to lie that much. There are a lot of people angry about the lying."

Rahn Wright, owner of The Tonsorial House barbershop, said the verdict "finalizes it."

"This has shook up a lot of people," he said. "But yes, we'll move along. To deliberately concoct that story, it was a pretty heartrending thing to do."

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Published October 28, 2006

Jurors say note by Lisa key to decision

Related content from LSJ:

- Lisa Holland guilty

By Derek Wallbank
Lansing State Journal

After more than a month-and-a-half of court-ordered silence about the role they played in the Lisa Holland trial, members of the jury finally spoke their minds.

All but one of the 12 jurors spoke to the media about 45 minutes after their two guilty verdicts for murder and child abuse were handed down Friday against Holland. Their names were not released.

The case was "very tough" to sit through, said Juror No. 16, a middle-aged woman. "It's a small boy, and he's not here anymore. I don't know what more I can say."

Lisa Holland will be sentenced Nov. 28 for murdering her adopted son, Ricky. Her husband, Tim Holland, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in early September.

His sentencing is set for Nov. 15.

The most compelling piece of the prosecution's case against Lisa, jurors agreed, was a note she wrote in which she said she didn't mean to kill Ricky.

The note to which they referred was one of several notes a former Ingham County Jail inmate said Lisa Holland passed to her, which she then gave police.

The note reads: "The truth needs to be told. It was an accident. I didn't mean to."

But Tim Holland's testimony didn't factor much in their decision at all, jurors said, mainly because his counter-intelligence background gave them pause about his truthfulness on the stand.

When asked how credible Tim Holland was, Juror No. 5, a middle-aged man, replied "not very, not at all."

In fact, each of the 11 jurors interviewed said they would have convicted Lisa even if Tim had never taken the stand.

But the person they did want to hear from, Lisa's dad Tom Taylor, invoked his Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself.

"There was so much I wanted to hear him say," Juror No. 16 said. "Just so much."

In addition, the foreman, who only identified himself as Dave, read a statement from all 12 jurors: "This trial and proceedings have been difficult for everyone involved. Our decision was unanimous on both counts. We ask that the media and the public respect the privacy of the jurors."

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Published October 28, 2006

Tips on how to cope with your emotions from the case

By Christine Rook
Lansing State Journal

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- [Lisa Holland guilty](#)
- [Lisa Holland guilty in son's death; prosecutor calls case 'scarring'](#)

The American Psychological Association offers the following tips. For more information, visit www.apa.org.

- Seek counseling.
- Avoid difficult conversations that might lead to an argument until you are well rested and able to hold your temper.
- Take a break from environments and people who stress you, even if that break is only 15 minutes long.
- Try using humor to defuse your anger. Instead of calling a particular person a dirtbag imagine what that person would look like as an actual bag of dirt.

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Published October 30, 2006

Protection: Holland jury did its job; now it's up to the rest of us

A Lansing State Journal editorial

An Ingham County jury last Friday did everything in its power to ensure Lisa Holland will never be able to harm another child.

They convicted her of the most serious murder charge, ensuring Holland will remain in prison for the rest of her life for killing her adopted son, Ricky.

Now attention needs to turn to another question: What are state officials doing to ensure that no other Michigan child suffers the abuse and brutal death little Ricky did.

And as the investigation into Lisa Holland and Tim Holland progressed, more and more evidence was uncovered about failures of child protection in Michigan. Gov. Jennifer Granholm and legislators have made the requisite pledges to do more.

Words won't be enough, though.

Looking at the totality of this case, it's clear that the existing system for monitoring and supporting foster families (Ricky was initially a foster child) and checking abuse claims is inadequate. We are all humans and we all make mistakes. But this tragedy is emblematic of systemic failures - a refusal by our culture to invest in child protection.

For this year's budget, more money was found to hire additional Child Protection Service workers. That is the tiniest of starts. Whoever is sitting in the governor's chair and the Legislature after Nov. 7 should commit themselves to reducing caseloads of individual state investigators. More workers and smaller caseloads should mean more attention to individual cases, and more protection for the defenseless.

This will cost money. Would anyone care to argue that we cannot afford to take these actions, though?

And a statewide discussion must be led on how to care for children who cannot stay with their biological families. A child advocacy group, Children's Rights, says that 40 percent of Michigan's 19,000 foster children are in unlicensed homes right now.

Foster children need permanent homes. Foster families need training and support.

And Michigan needs to remember Ricky every day.

WZZM13 ONLINE - ABC TELEVISION for ALL OF WEST MICHIGAN

Why did system fail Ricky? Officials sort through lessons of brutal case

BY JACK KRESNAK FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Created: 10/29/2006 8:14:40 AM
Updated: 10/29/2006 8:14:40 AM[+ Increase Type Size](#)[- Decrease Type Size](#)

If the chilling death of 7-year-old Ricky Holland is to have any meaning, prosecutors and children's advocates say, it must prompt child welfare reforms and a commitment to better funding for a struggling system.

The Holland case yielded more than 20,000 documents, countless hours of court hearings in two counties and a four-year trail of lies from Ricky's killers - his state-licensed foster and adoptive parents. So finding out what went wrong in Michigan's child protection system - and fixing it - won't be easy.

State officials, prosecutors and police agencies already are dissecting the case, looking for the lessons it may yield on ways to detect and prevent child abuse.

"It was a learning experience, and if it's going to be of any value at all, it's going to have to equate into some kind of change," Ingham County Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency said.

Ferency presented the complex, gut-wrenching case to the Ingham County Circuit Court jury that on Friday convicted 33-year-old Lisa Holland of first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse in her son's death. Her husband, Tim Holland, 37, earlier pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and testified against his wife.

The Michigan Department of Human Services and the Office of the Children's Ombudsman have completed investigations into what happened to Ricky and other foster children the DHS placed in the Hollands' care between October 2000 and January 2006, when the couple's deceptions about Ricky's disappearance in July 2005 came to light.

But results of the investigations won't be released immediately to the public or to a legislative committee headed by Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township, which has been trying to find out what went wrong. Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning III said the criminal case is still open because others may be charged with contributing to Ricky's death.

State law prohibits releasing information from child protection cases until criminal proceedings are complete.

Still, DHS reports and court documents from Jackson and Ingham counties that were obtained by the Free Press - augmented by testimony and evidence presented during the Hollands' preliminary examination last spring and Lisa Holland's murder trial - point to instances that should have raised red flags but did not.

Ricky entered the child welfare system on Sept. 30, 2000, when his mother, who was homeless and jobless, asked Child Protective Services to place her 3-year-old son in temporary foster care.

He was placed with the Hollands in Jackson on Oct. 2, 2000. At first, according to the records, he had frequent visits with his mother and displayed some behavioral problems, but his problems intensified in October 2001 when his father won a court order to visit his son.

After those visits, one counseling report said, Ricky's development regressed.

"His emotional state is currently very fragile," the report said. Finding a permanent home for Ricky "is urgent, as the child's future is in limbo, and he lives with the fear that he will be removed from the only family he has ever known."

Based partly on the counseling reports and his mother's inability to find suitable housing, the Jackson County DHS office petitioned a judge to terminate his biological parents' rights. After a judge did so on Feb. 4, 2002, Ricky's visits with his biological parents ended.

A short time later, Ricky made statements to Susan Honeck, his therapist at Catholic Social Services of Jackson, that seemed to indicate he was being abused in the Holland home.

On Feb. 21, 2002, Honeck reported to Child Protective Services that, "Ricky has a rope burn on his left wrist. I asked how he got it. He said it's from the dog rope they use to tie him in bed at night. They put cold handcuffs on my legs, too. Because he peed in his room."

A CPS investigator interviewed Ricky immediately outside of the presence of Lisa Holland.

"When asked how he hurt his wrist, Ricky said that he was playing a game with his mom and dad," according to a report. "He said that he doesn't like the game, but that 'they keep doing it.' Ricky reported that his mom and dad tie up his hands in his bedroom while he is on his bed.

"He reported that the Hollands tie his arms with the red dog rope and handcuff his feet together with his dad's handcuffs. Ricky said that he had his own handcuffs because 'I'm a junior policeman.' Ricky reported that this happens every night."

Lisa Holland told the CPS investigator that the allegation was untrue and, despite the apparent consistency in the 4-year-old's statements, the investigator did not substantiate maltreatment, apparently because she could not definitively say what caused the injury.

The investigator never contacted Honeck directly but sent a letter saying the complaint wasn't substantiated.

The records show other instances of inaction and missteps by DHS workers:

- There is no documentation that a foster care worker visited Ricky in the Holland home between Oct. 2, 2000, and Sept. 24, 2002.
- A foster care worker consented to Lisa Holland's request in April 2002 to stop counseling for Ricky, even though a psychiatrist had prescribed psychotropic medications.
- Even after the Hollands reported on July 2, 2005, that Ricky had run away - and a police task force was trying to find him - a Jackson County DHS adoption worker asked Jackson Family Court Judge John McBain to approve the adoption of Ricky's youngest sibling, a 1 1/2 -year-old boy, without a formal court hearing.

McBain was not told in the that the Hollands had reported Ricky missing.

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Accusations linger in Ricky's death; Holland faces life term

BY JACK KRESNAK FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Created: 10/28/2006 8:26:31 AM
Updated: 10/28/2006 10:51:36 AM

LANSING - The woman who slyly wrapped presents for her missing 7-year-old son Ricky Holland last Christmas - knowing his body was rotting in a swamp - will spend this Christmas in a prison cell.

But Friday's murder and child abuse conviction of Lisa Holland, the former foster mother allowed to adopt Ricky and his four siblings despite warning signs that she was abusive, by no means closes the troubling case - and even raises wider new questions about blame for the death.

"This investigation is by no means over," Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III said Friday. He said others could be charged, but he declined to elaborate.

A lengthy investigation of the Department of Human Services by the state's Office of the Children's Ombudsman was completed last month but will not be released to the state Legislature or anyone else until Dunnings says his office is done with the case.

The law governing the Children's Ombudsman specifies that its reports can be released once a criminal investigation is over.

Holland will be sentenced Nov. 28 to life in prison without parole. Her husband, Tim Holland, who earlier pleaded guilty to second-degree murder, will be sentenced Nov. 15. He faces up to life in prison but would be eligible for parole.

Ricky's three siblings, ages 2 to 4, and the Hollands' 2 1/2 -year-old biological daughter are in the custody of Tim Holland's relatives and are likely to be adopted when a family court judge terminates parental rights.

While the dramatic verdict in the seven-week trial in Ingham County Circuit Court answered the question of who killed Ricky Holland, it raised new questions expected to linger for months.

The DHS, which has divulged little about the Holland case, released a statement Friday by director Marianne Udow that said, "Lisa and Tim Holland were terribly and fatally cruel to a 7-year-old boy - a reality that devastates us all."

Udow said Ricky's death "has brought focus to the difficult task of protecting children and should be a reminder to all of us that caring for children and helping them find safe and stable homes is a shared commitment that begins with responsible parenting and requires the support of the entire community."

The high-profile case became an issue in the gubernatorial race when Republican challenger Dick DeVos blamed Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm and her administration for Ricky's death as well as the killings of two other foster children.

John Truscott, a spokesman for DeVos, said responsibility for the deaths of Ricky Holland, the two other foster children and the victims of parolee Patrick Selepek should be laid at Granholm's feet.

"There have been adults and children who have died as a result of bad decisions in this administration," Truscott said Friday.

Chris DeWitt, a spokesman for Granholm, said, "It is shameful that DeVos is using the tragic death of Ricky Holland for political purposes."

"When there have been problems, she has taken action," DeWitt said of the governor. "If indeed there are problems that are uncovered based on this particular case, she will do as she has done in other instances."

In the courtroom Friday morning, Lisa Holland smiled as she sat with her attorneys waiting for the jury.

She stopped smiling and trembled slightly as the jury foreman announced the guilty verdict about 10:45 a.m. After the jurors were individually polled, sheriff's deputies brought the 33-year-old Holland to her feet, handcuffed her and quickly took her away. Moments later, she was crying quietly as she was brought back into court to hear the sentencing date from Judge Paula Manderfield.

Her attorneys, Andrew Abood and Mike Nichols, said she was devastated by the verdict.

Holland's 37-year-old husband, a former civilian counter-terrorism analyst for the Army who pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in Ricky's death on Sept. 5, played a large role in his wife's trial.

He described a life of cruelty for the boy who was placed in their licensed foster home by the Jackson County DHS office in October 2000.



"It was like living in a concentration camp" for Ricky, Tim Holland said.

Holland, whose credibility was attacked by his wife's attorneys, claimed his wife duct-taped Ricky to a refrigerator, locked him in the basement where he was afraid of bugs and spiders and frequently hit him in the head with a large, decorative wooden spoon.

 [Click here to play video](#)



Lisa Holland is led from the courtroom Friday (ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)

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From the get-go, as Assistant Prosecutor Ferency told the jury, Tim and Lisa Holland worked to spin a false story that Ricky had run away the night of July 1, 2005. It was a ruse to deflect attention from the abuse that ended in the boy's languishing death.

The ruse began with Tim Holland's 911 call about 9:30 a.m. July 2 to report that his adopted son had run away.

When Ricky was 3 1/2, Jackson County DHS placed him in the Hollands' home in Jackson on Oct. 2, 2000.

Over the next three years, DHS foster care worker Theresa Bronsberg had responsibility for monitoring Ricky's care. But DHS records show that, for a nearly two-year period, Bronsberg did not document once visiting the Hollands' foster home.

The couple moved to Leroy Township in May 2005.

After Ricky's disappearance, police dug up parts of the Hollands' backyard on Aug. 12, 2005, after a neighbor reported seeing someone digging there. It turned out to be a grave for a pet dog, and police were unwilling then to say publicly that the Hollands were suspects in Ricky's death.

But on Sept. 6, 2005, police returned to their home with search warrants and found a cut-up, blood-spattered orange T-shirt in a diaper bag that Lisa Holland tried to take with her when she was asked to leave during the search. DNA tests later showed the blood was Ricky's. Still there was not enough evidence to charge.

The break came Jan. 25, 2006, when Tim Holland went to police and said Lisa Holland had assaulted and tried to kill him after an argument.

Lisa Holland was arrested that night.

The following day, Tim Holland led police to Ricky's body in a swampy state game area south of Dansville. Both Hollands were charged with open murder on Jan. 28. Testifying Oct. 12 at his wife's trial, Tim Holland gave a gruesome account of Ricky's tortured life and cruel death. "I didn't mean to do it," Lisa Holland shrieked, her husband said.

Tim Holland said he didn't take Ricky to a doctor before his death because his wife stopped him, and he didn't press the matter out of fear of starting a violent fight.

"I loved my wife more than I loved my son," he said.

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October 28, 2006

Jurors: Mom killed Ricky

Lisa Holland will spend life in prison for murder; jury is swayed by jailhouse note: "It was an accident. I didn't mean to."

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

LANSING -- In the end, Lisa Holland's own words condemned her.

Thrust into the national spotlight for allegations of horrific abuse, she barely uttered a sentence during her Ingham County Circuit Court trial on charges she killed her adopted son, Ricky.

But it was one simple note among 312 pieces of evidence that underscored her guilt, said jurors after convicting her of murder Friday: A handwritten letter slipped to one of her fellow inmates at the Ingham County Jail.

"I think it's too late now," Holland wrote in neat handwriting not unlike that of a schoolgirl. "But I have to tell someone. The truth needs to be told.

"It was an accident. I didn't mean to."

The 34-year-old mother from Williamston bowed her head and cried silently when jurors found her guilty of first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse for killing Ricky with a tack hammer.

He died July 1, 2005.

After seven weeks and more than 50 witnesses, jurors needed just over a day of deliberations to convict her of crimes that, by law, will send her to prison for life without parole. Judge Paula Manderfield will make the sentence official Nov. 28.

"We did this for Ricky," said Sheriff's Detective Lt. Roy Holliday, who worked thousands of hours to crack the case and still keeps a photo of the boy in his planner, 10 months to the day after he was present when Ricky's body was pulled from the icy waters of an Ingham County swamp Jan. 27.

"It will always be with me, the utter disregard for human life witnessed that night on the edge of the road, his body with insects feeding on it, and knowing his parents had put him there," Holiday said.

"Everybody failed Ricky, from his biological parents right on down the list. We couldn't fail him, too."

The death of the tiny sandy-haired boy who was beaten, duct-taped to appliances and made to rummage in the trash for food has spurred calls to reform Michigan's foster care system. Speaking to reporters in the courtroom after the trial, at least one juror hoped the case would lead to changes.

Manderfield sealed the 12 jurors' names. Those who spoke with the media refused to be identified, referring to themselves only by their juror numbers.

"I came into this with an open mind, not knowing the whole story, not knowing Ricky," said Juror No. 1, a man in an argyle sweater. "But after listening to everything and looking at the evidence, you learn that this little kid was so special in all of our hearts, and it became more difficult as time went on."

The sensational case started July 2, 2005, when Lisa Holland's husband, Tim, called 911 to report the disappearance of their son, adopted through the state foster care system when he was 3 years old. The call launched a search by police and nearly 2,000 volunteers.

In reality, Ricky had died the day before, when prosecutors believe the blue-eyed youngster succumbed to dehydration and total body system failure brought on by untreated closed-head injuries -- caused by two blows to the head with a hammer from Lisa.

Prosecutors alleged the injuries were part of a pattern of abuse that included food deprivation, overmedication, beatings, and binding with harnesses, duct tape, a dog rope and handcuffs, prosecutors say.

The prosecution brought 52 witnesses, including Tim Holland, who pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in September and told jurors that he returned from a business trip to find Ricky bleeding and near death. Tim Holland's sentencing is Nov. 15.

Other witnesses claimed they observed bruises, rope burns and other signs of abuse on the little boy, who routinely stole food from other children's lunches.

"There's no 'glad' in this case," said Michael Ferency, an assistant prosecutor who tried the case.

"The great weight of 50 witnesses and 312 pieces of evidence is just too much for a jury to overcome," said Mike Nichols, a defense attorney. "It's just crushing."

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or kbouffard@detnews.com.

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Justice for a young, tortured victim

October 28, 2006

DETROIT FREE PRESS SATURDAY STARDTERS: Some points you can raise to get a conversation flowing this weekend

Little Ricky Holland finally got justice Friday when his adoptive mother, Lisa Holland, was found guilty of first-degree murder and first-degree child abuse. His adoptive father, Tim Holland, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder last month. After making the 7-year-old's life miserable -- locking him up, leashing him, starving him and beating him with a hammer -- the couple sparked an all-out search in the summer of 2005 when they said he ran away. Would that he had.

Lansing State Journal Letters

October 30, 2006

DeVos out of line

I believe Dick DeVos was out of line in the gubernatorial debate on Oct. 16. He blamed Gov. Jennifer Granholm for the death of children, i.e. Ricky Holland.

So, is DeVos saying all governors who had children die on their watch are to blame? Is there any responsibility to the system or to the caregiver? With the children getting killed in schools, does that mean President Bush isn't equally responsible for these events?

I doubt Dick DeVos would feel this way if some child were to pass away on his watch.

Jason Sayles
Lansing

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October 28, 2006

Laura Berman

Laura Berman: However satisfying, guilty verdict won't bring Ricky back



After the murder trial of Lisa Holland, justice is not its own reward.

The prosecutor, a courthouse gladiator by profession, cannot bring himself to take pride in the guilty verdict.

A mother tortured and killed her child and left him, alone, in a ditch. That reality, the one the prosecutor has lived with and could not change, blots out even the idea of satisfaction.

'An emptiness'

"It is more like an emptiness," says the Ingham County prosecutor, Stuart Dunnings III, weariness in his voice.

The sadness of Ricky Holland's life and death clings after the verdict. A guilty verdict, however just, cannot change the unfairness of a 7-year-old boy's short and unhappy life.

It cannot change the horror of what Ricky Holland endured. It doesn't touch the loneliness that his story stirs in everyone who imagines his lonely life, even for a moment.

Failed by his birth parents and his adoptive parents, failed by the state, failed by everyone who saw him without really seeing him, he lived, suffered and died.

You don't even want to ask, "For what?"

At the Ingham County morgue, where Ricky's remains have been held for nine months, the medical examiner cannot yet release him to be buried.

Peace, a final resting place, still eludes him.

After all this -- the long criminal investigation, the parents' histrionics, the Ingham County trial and its conclusion with father Tim Holland pleading guilty to second-degree murder and Lisa Holland's first-degree conviction Friday -- after all of that, Ricky is still locked in a box.

He is nowhere near hallowed ground.

Peace put on hold

On Friday, after the jury rendered its verdict, the medical examiner immediately sought to get permission to release Ricky's body for burial. But the prosecutor asked him to wait. To be patient.

It is not the most satisfying part of his job.

"In a typical homicide, we conduct an autopsy, record the findings, and then we're given permission to release the remains to the next of kin," says Dr. Dean Sienko, the medical examiner. "But this is not a typical case."

Parents do not typically torture and kill their children.

Children do not typically die without having an obvious, loving next of kin.

The procedures for releasing the remains to family are unclear when criminal investigations continue, when other kin might still be charged.

Isn't it unusual for a murder victim's remains to be held by the state, even now, 18 months after his death?

"If you can tell me what's usual about this case, I might be able to answer that," says Dunnings, the prosecutor.

In the world of the prosecutor, Ricky's case is usual and not.

"The only thing unique about Ricky is the degree of torture he underwent," Dunnings says.

On Monday, his office will begin to prosecute another caregiver accused of killing another child.

The prosecutor's voice is heavy with sadness as he talks. Peace eludes him, too.

You can reach Laura Berman at (248) 647-7221 or lberman@detnews.com.

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Prison among possibilities for parents

Rose's mom, dad to be arraigned next week

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, October 28, 2006

By Kim Crawford

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They could get as much as 17 months in prison; they could get probation. Or something in between.

But sometime in the weeks ahead, Jeffrey C. Kelley and Michelle L. Bowen will face Genesee Probate Judge Robert E. Weiss after they pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter in the death of their daughter, 5-year-old Rose Marie Kelley.

Rose died in squalor and filth in their east-side Flint home June 3 after being ill for several days. Her parents had not sought medical attention for her.

On Friday in Flint District Court, Kelley and Bowen were arraigned before Judge Michael D. McAra. In a deal with the Genesee County prosecutor's office, their lawyers said, the two agreed to enter no-contest pleas on the involuntary manslaughter charges when they are arraigned Wednesday before Weiss.

In return, Prosecutor David S. Leyton said his office would recommend Weiss use a sentencing guideline of no more than 17 months in prison or jail.

Placing the plea deal on the record in district court was the second major development related to Rose Kelley in as many days.

On Thursday, after rejecting a deal with prosecutors and vowing to fight to regain custody of her three other children, Bowen relented, giving up her parental rights and accepting the plea deal.

Kelley had already said he would enter into the manslaughter charge plea deal and give up his parental rights.

After the arraignment of Bowen and Kelley, Leyton said the developments had achieved "justice for Rose Kelley" and secured the lives and the safety of the three other children who were taken from the home.

Those children - two younger siblings, who were 2 and 6 when Rose died, and an old half-sister, who was 10 - were placed in foster care.

The two youngest are the children of Kelley and Bowen, while the eldest daughter was the child of Bowen and a Flint man named Jeffery Mitchell. Prosecutors said this week that the children are thriving in foster care.

The couple were released on a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond.

Detroit Free Press

Wayne County

October 30, 2006

DETROIT: Charges expected in toddler's death

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy is expected to announce charges today in the case of a Plymouth day care center that allegedly ignored signs of abuse of a 2-year-old girl who died in September.

State officials shut down the Childtime Children's Center earlier this month, after a former employee alleged staff ignored signs that Allison Newman was being abused. Center officials denied the allegations.

Foster mother Carol Poole, 40, of Canton was charged with felony murder, first-degree child abuse and involuntary manslaughter after the girl died Sept. 22.

Poole said the girl hit her head accidentally.

October 28, 2006

Detroit News

Wayne Briefs

Plymouth

Prosecutor to reveal child center charges

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy has announced a Monday press conference to outline charges against Plymouth's Childtime Learning Center, which cared for 2-year-old Allison Newman before her foster mother was charged with her September death. State regulators closed the center earlier this month following accusations from a former worker that the center ignored signs of abuse. Newman's foster mother, Allison Poole, 40, of Canton Township faces murder charges.

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Article published Oct 27, 2006

Nowak gets 20 to 40 years

Keith Nowak, the Dundee man who was convicted of causing the death of his infant son, was sentenced Thursday to serve 20 to 40 years in prison.

His sentencing was imposed by Monroe County Circuit Judge Joseph A. Costello Jr., who called the crime the ultimate child abuse.

Mr. Nowak was accused of squeezing the torso of 2-month-old Andrew so hard that he broke 15 ribs and caused other injuries so severe that a veteran coroner said they were the worst she had ever seen for a baby.

"There is no doubt in the court's mind that this is the ultimate act of child abuse," Judge Costello said before sentencing Mr. Nowak, who stood before him in a jail uniform. "I can't explain how this happened. This child had no way to fend for itself."

Before he was sentenced, Mr. Nowak, 30, briefly apologized and specifically mentioned his family, saying he was sorry for putting them through the ordeal.

His attorney, Russell A. Smith of Temperance, said his client was remorseful for causing the death of his son that early, snowy morning of Nov. 26.

"This is a tragic case," Mr. Smith said. "He loved this infant child."

Andrew's mother, Misty Ripple, was at the sentencing but chose not to comment. As part of his sentence, Mr. Nowak is not to have any contact with her or her family.

Mr. Nowak was scheduled for trial on Monday but pleaded no contest to second-degree murder instead. The court treats a no contest plea as a guilty plea.

Mr. Nowak told The Evening News from jail prior to his sentence that he did not squeeze his son out of frustration, which is what medical examiners and police maintain. Mr. Nowak said he fell on top of Andrew after ingesting numerous painkillers for burns he had suffered on his feet from a work accident.

The coroner who performed the autopsy refuted that claim, saying the child suffered injuries that could be inflicted only by sustained pressure, such as squeezing.

Mr. Nowak was given credit for 334 days he served in the county jail. He also must undergo impulse control and substance abuse counseling.

After the brief sentencing hearing, Mr. Nowak was led out of the courtroom and past several people in attendance. No one said anything.



Rape of 12-year-old runaway girl nets 10 1/2-year sentence

Clinton Township man sentenced as habitual offender

PUBLISHED: October 28, 2006

By Jameson Cook
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A 24-year-old Clinton Township man was ordered to spend more than 10 years in prison for having sex with a 12-year-old girl who had run away from home.

Lee Premise Manuel was sentenced by visiting Judge Kenneth Sanborn of Macomb County Circuit Court to a minimum term of 126 months to 240 months for a sexual encounter in April 2004 in his apartment on Village Street or nearby apartment in the area of 15 Mile Road and Gratiot Avenue.

Since Manuel is a habitual offender, the state Department of Corrections could keep him in prison for the rest of his life, according to assistant Macomb prosecutor Rebecca Oster. Manuel has a prior record of three felony and seven misdemeanor convictions as an adult and the same number of felonies and misdemeanors as a juvenile, Oster said.

A jury convicted him of one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct for having intercourse with the girl and one count of contributing to the delinquency of a minor by giving her marijuana to smoke and alcohol to drink. The jury deliberated less than two hours before also finding him not guilty of a second count of first-degree CSC for an alleged digital penetration and not guilty on one count of accosting a minor, as he was accused of driving the victim to Detroit and attempting to have her engage in prostitution.

The victim, who was under the care of her grandmother, ran away from home Easter Sunday 2004 because she had been "grounded" and within one to two hours met Manuel near his home about 10 to 11 p.m., Oster said. The girl spent three nights with him, two nights at two apartments in the same complex and a third night at the Super 8 motel in Roseville, according to investigators.

The sexual assault occurred the second night. On April 15, 2004, Roseville police Detective Clifford VanDerLinden received a report that the girl, who had been reported missing two days earlier, was at the motel.

She was picked up and taken the next day to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners facility for a rape-kit exam. DNA from semen matched Manuel, according to testimony.

The trial included Manuel representing himself and cross examining the victim, with attorney Steven Freers serving as an adviser.

"It (being questioned by Manuel) was very uncomfortable" for the girl but she testified well, Oster said.

The girl said that she told Manuel "no" and cried during the assault, the assistant prosecutor said. The girl said it was the one and only time she has had sex.

Even if the girl had complied, she was too young to give legal consent to have sex, Oster noted.

The girl had been reluctant to testify at a preliminary examination hearing in 41B District Court in front of Judge Sebastian Lucido. Later, the girl said that she had feared that "Manuel or someone who knows Manuel would hurt her or her family," Oster said.

The victim said in a statement read that "she felt confused, angry, hurt and blamed herself," Oster said.

"She said she felt guilty, and that he (Manuel) made her feel guilty," Oster said.

The victim, now 14, spent some time in the Juvenile Justice Center for running away and is gradually going back to living with her grandmother.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/102806/loc_rape001.shtml

ClickOnDetroit.com

Sex Offenders Face Big Halloween Restrictions

Law Enforcement Officials Check Up On Offenders

POSTED: 10:22 am EST October 30, 2006

Communities across the country are working with sex offenders and trying to ensure a safe, happy Halloween.

- **Web Site:** [Map Sex Offenders](#)

Law enforcement officials in several areas are checking up on parolees and probationers on their state's sex offender registry.

Costume parties are off limits for some sex offenders. Tennessee, New York, Ohio, North Carolina and Maryland are just a few of the states where there are restrictions for sex offenders at Halloween.

Maryland law enforcement officials are warning child sex offenders not to get too excited about Halloween. In fact, the offenders are being asked not to decorate their homes to attract trick-or-treaters.

The Division of Parole and Probation sent a letter this month to all parolees and probationers on the state's sex offender registry. It recommends that the offenders keep their lights off and their doors closed Tuesday evening.

The letter said those actions will show neighbors that the offenders are trying to change the direction of their lives. And it said offenders can protect themselves from misunderstandings that could lead to legal allegations.

Several jurisdictions including Baltimore County will be sending out plainclothes officers to look for sex offenders who have contact with children other than their own.

And in North Carolina, the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office plans to do more checks on sex offenders.

A spokeswoman said the office works to verify sex offender's addresses every day, but there will be more checking on Tuesday. The county has nearly 600 registered sex offenders, and authorities will try to verify as many addresses as they can.

Parole officers also plan to visit about 100 sex offenders who are under their supervision.

All sex offenders in North Carolina who are under parole or probation are required to stay home and are prohibited from participating in Halloween activities at or outside their homes.

Sex offenders in Gaston County, N.C., have already been ordered to spend part of Halloween at the county courthouse.

In Tennessee, sex offenders on probation or parole are banned from costume parties and aren't allowed to put up decorations like jack-o-lanterns that might attract youngsters.

Corn field mazes and haunted houses are also off limits. The restrictions apply to all sex offenders on probation or parole -- about 2,000 of the 8,100 registered offenders living in the state -- and not specifically to those offenders whose crimes involved minors.

That even means that offenders with children must find someone else to accompany them on trick-or-treating walks. And if other children knock on their doors on Halloween, the offenders must not answer.

New York has similar restrictions, and a Halloween curfew.

Sex offenders in parts of Ohio and North Carolina were ordered to attend meetings with authorities that coincide with the prime hours for trick-or-treating.

In Wisconsin, six registered sex offenders were arrested over the weekend for taking part in trick-or-treating. "Operation Trick-or-Treat" run by the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department was designed to make sure predators were nowhere near children. Registered sex

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offenders were not allowed to be outside their homes an hour before, during, or an hour after trick-or-treating.

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October 27, 2006

Hardiman protects children

Even though "jobs" seem to be the leading issue in this election cycle, as a new mother, my child's future, and the lives of all Michigan's children have become my top priority. Senator Bill Hardiman has the pleasure, and sometimes, the unfortunate task of chairing the Human Services Committee. This committee is one of the most unpopular committees in Lansing due to the tough issues that occur within the Department of Human Services in their effort to defend our state's children. The 29th District couldn't ask for a better advocate in the Michigan Legislature because he isn't in it for the press or the campaign support that many of the other members of the Legislature enjoy with more popular committees. During his time in the Senate, Senator Hardiman has introduced legislation to require background checks for day-care workers and to require that day-care facilities inform parents when a high-risk investigation is occurring at that facility.

He also helped get money added to the state budget for before- and after-school programs and continued to defend funding for "at-risk" students in our public schools. He works tirelessly because he believes we all have an obligation to protect our future and our most vulnerable constituents -- our children. I can honestly say that Senator Bill Hardiman is one of the most effective, genuine and caring legislators in our state. I hope you will join me in voting for him on Nov. 7.

□ MANDY BOLTER/Ada



— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Walberg slammed over staffer's crime

Opponent Renier wastes no time in going on the offensive

Sunday, October 29, 2006

BY ART AISNER

News Staff Reporter

An unpopular president, growing concerns about the war in Iraq and continued focus on Republican Congress members under investigation all had Democratic congressional candidate Sharon Renier looking forward to some extra momentum as the campaign entered its final weeks.

Then on Wednesday, reports surfaced about a member of Republican opponent Tim Walberg's campaign staff awaiting sentencing on a domestic violence charge for striking a 9-year-old foster child in his home.

Renier generally ran positive campaigns in winning consecutive party primaries and in a closer-than-expected loss to U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, in 2004. But she wasted little time going on the offensive. She criticized Walberg for keeping the staffer once charges were filed in Eaton County, accusing the former preacher of poor judgment and "betraying those who have relied on him for guidance."

The Walberg staffer, Daniel Coons, 30, resigned later that day as volunteer coordinator of the campaign. But the damage has been done, Renier said.

Walberg campaign manager Joe Wicks said the Coons issue is resolved as far as the campaign is concerned, and that Walberg was focused on getting his message of lower taxes, "one-man, one-woman" marriage and energy independence out to voters.

A recent poll showed the conservative Walberg with only an 8 percentage point lead in what is a Republican-heavy district that stretches west of Ann Arbor to Battle Creek, and south to the Ohio border.

"He gives us so much to work with and this is just an example of how he's brought Washington politics local," said Renier, of Munith. "Do we send to Congress the small businesswoman farmer or a morally bankrupt politician who places his loyalty to a child abuser over the child?"

Renier didn't stop there and also accused Walberg and Club for Growth, the national organization bankrolling the majority of his campaign, for running inaccurate commercials claiming she supports taxing children \$500.

She said the focus should instead be on the anti-tax Walberg and his vote against a \$5,000 child-care tax credit for families while a member of the Michigan House in 1997.

Wicks defended Walberg's vote on the particular bill because he said it was part of a larger bill package that raised Michigan's gasoline tax.

"If Sharon Renier wants to promote her support for gas tax increases, we'll welcome that," he said. "Tim's record and stances on the issues match the district and we expect that to bear out on election day."

Wicks also noted some polls have Walberg, who defeated Schwarz with 40 percent of the vote in the August primary, up by as many as 17 percentage points.

The real difference could depend on what's spent in the campaign's final week.

Walberg, who raised more than \$1 million largely from Club for Growth, had more than \$116,000 on hand, according to reports filed earlier this month. Renier raised more than \$39,000 and had \$1,379 on hand.

Renier said she's received roughly \$1,000 to \$2,000 in contributions each day of late, and could have as much as \$100,000 to use on television and radio ads as well as billboards.

"She'd have a real chance if they could get some money coming in," said Republican strategist John Truscott, who acted as Schwarz's campaign spokesman.

Commercial appeal

It's unusual for prosecutors to purposely make stars of the criminals they put away, but Attorney General Mike Cox is doing just that in his re-election bid.

Cox's campaign unveiled a 30-second spot last week centered around Coral Watts, a confessed serial killer suspected of three murders in Ann Arbor in 1980.

The ad credits Cox's cold-case team of prosecutors for securing a murder conviction in the 1979 slaying of a Ferndale woman, which prevented Watts' scheduled early release from prison this year due to a legal loophole. The commercial features images of Watts behind bars and in various court settings, along with shots of Cox ducking under crime-scene tape, talking with investigators and making arguments in court.

Cox authorized the charges and supervised the case from afar, but never prosecuted Watts in court, prompting his Democratic opponent Amos Williams to claim the commercial is borderline misrepresentation.

"It's an embellishment and the wood grain doesn't match," said Williams' spokeswoman Kitty Kurth, referring to the contrast between actual court footage and images featuring Cox on what she said was a commercial set.

Williams also complained about Cox's previous ad that touts his unit on Internet predators as leading the nation. He demanded Cox pull the commercial after learning Illinois, Iowa, Texas and Utah arrested more suspects than Michigan. In Texas, the number of arrests is four times higher.

"It's typical, typical Mike Cox. It was deceptive. It was untruthful and it was more of the same," said Williams, who campaigned with fellow Vietnam veteran and former Georgia senator Max Cleland in Ypsilanti last week during a day-long tour of Michigan.

The ad is being recycled in other media markets across the state, is still on the campaign Web site, and will not be removed, said Stu Sandler, Cox's campaign spokesman.

Sandler noted that the commercial never indicated the unit was the best and took offense to the opposition's claims that Cox was minimally involved in keeping Watts off the street. He authorized the charges, dedicated the staff and resources to the prosecution, and was responsible for the key witness coming forward because of a nationally televised appeal for information on any Watts cases in 2004, Sandler said.

"To say he wasn't involved in the case shows that Amos Williams doesn't understand what goes into the attorney general's job as a prosecutor," Sandler said.

Coincidentally, Williams began running his own ad last week touting the integrity he'd bring to the office as a soldier, retired police officer and civil rights attorney.

No word yet if Cox objects.

Quotables

- "A lot of the young men are concluding that it's a very, very big improvement over me as far as they're concerned," said Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos to Chelsea residents at a recent campaign stop about new ads featuring his 24-year-old daughter Elissa.
- "We in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County are known champions of environment, but it's not because we're some crazy, wild-eyed liberals. It's because we know if we don't protect natural resources and don't protect our environment, we're not protecting the most precious resource we have, and that's us," said term-limited state Rep. Chris Kolb, D-Ann Arbor, at a recent Ann Arbor campaign event for Gov. Jennifer Granholm hosted by environmentalists.

This is an occasional feature focusing on local and state politics through the November election. Have information or a suggestion for a topic? Art Aisner can be reached at aaisner@annarbornews.com or 734-

Support bill mandating joint custody in divorce

Ironwood Daily Globe

Published Friday, October 27, 2006 4:58:00 PM Central Time

To the editor:

The Michigan Family Law Court System would have you believe the slogan "in the best interests of the child" is behind their reasoning in making one divorced parent, usually the father, into a "non-custodial" visitor in the lives of his children. A more accurate phrase for them to use would be "in the best interests of the state, bureaucrats and lawyers."

Every state, including Michigan, will share in a \$4.2 billion federal block grant in 2006, plus compete for an additional \$458 million from a bonus fund. How do the states qualify to get all of this money? Very simple. When a married couple with children divorces, the parents are labeled as "custodial" or "non-custodial."

To the courts and state, this means money. If the courts did not order this, thus producing an "absent" child support paying NCP, the state would not fit into the federal appropriations guidelines in Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. Federal funding provides a very powerful incentive to deprive a child of a loving, caring and responsible parent.

House Bill 5267 -- The Equal Parenting Bill is under consideration in the Michigan House of Representatives. This would mandate the courts to order joint custody unless proven by clear evidence that a parent is unfit, unwilling, or unable to care for the child(ren).

Supreme Court Justice O'Connor has stated "The

Fourteenth Amendment provides that no state shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of the law," and that "the liberty interest of parents in the care, custody and control of their children is perhaps the oldest of the fundamental liberty interest recognized by this court."

Why then, is all the media attention being given to bureaucrats advocating for terrorists and illegal aliens to somehow be protected under our Constitutional rights when the Constitutional and fundamental rights of millions of Americans who have lived here for generations are ignored and stripped from us on a daily basis?

I have always believed that the United States Constitution protected the citizens of our country. Not so when it comes to the family law courts.

Please call or write your Representative, and urge them to support House Bill 5267. Don't delay, do this now, for the sake of all of our children. Go to house.michigan.gov/representatives.asp, or mail at PO Box 30014, Lansing MI 48909.

Phillip N. Wurm

Hastings



Chance encounter reunites long-separated siblings

CLIO

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, October 29, 2006

By Shena Abercrombie

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CLIO - Michael and David Bentley always dreamed of finding the sister they were separated from when they were adopted by different families as young children.

They didn't realize she was living within a few miles of their home in the Kearsley School District, or that they even shared an acquaintance.

Even more surprising is the unusual set of circumstances that would eventually lead the siblings to find each other after two decades apart.

"It was some kind of divine intervention," said Robert Sias of Clio, the key to their storybook-like reconnection. "You could wind up on Oprah with this kind of story."

Sias works part time with the developmentally disabled, often as a counselor in group homes.

That's where he met Michael Bentley, 27, a shy young man who loves writing science fiction stories, collecting bottles for pocket change, and who often asked him to help find a missing sister.

Sias also was friends with a neighbor whose daughter Nellie Warner, 25, was autistic and severely mentally impaired.

A few weeks ago, he invited them to come and see the miniature horses at the adult care facility where Michael was a resident.

Michael recognized Nellie immediately as his long-lost sister, who still lives at home with her adoptive mother in northern Genesee County.

"When she came over, I knew it was her. The face, the voice - yeah, I knew it was her," he said.

Sias remembers Michael hanging back from the group and staring, before rushing to him in a highly agitated state and begging him to help find his sister.

That's when everyone else took note of the uncanny resemblance between Nellie and Michael.

The two had identical blue eyes, the same medium brown and blond hair and the same ears.

"It was like a lightning bolt," Sias said. "I never put it together until that day when everybody was together and we looked at the two of them."

Although finding lost loved ones is a bit easier in the Internet age, when it seems like everyone is a keystroke away, it wasn't as simple for Michael and David.

Their parents were developmentally disabled and unable to care for their children. And Michael and Nellie have varying levels of mental impairment.

Michael has the capability of a 14-year-old, while Nellie is closer to that of a 3- to 5-year old.

Born Michael and David Duvenois, Michael was 7 and David was 3 when they were taken from their birth mother and placed in foster care, then later adopted. Nellie Duvenois was then adopted by a different family.

"I really wanted the three of them to stay together, but Social Services told me she really need to have a home of her own because she's such a needy child, healthwise," said Michael and David's adoptive mother, Janet, who asked because of privacy concerns to be identified by only her first name.

"Finding their sister was an ongoing topic. I heard that at least once a year throughout their lives."

David, 22, is not mentally impaired. After graduating from Kearsley High School, he bought a house and recently began a career as a long-haul truck driver.

That leaves little time for finding long-lost family members. So he was shocked when his adoptive mother called with the news that Michael had met their sister.

"I was very excited about it when I got the word that Michael possibly ran into her," David said. "We always wondered about her. I guess it gave me some closure. I'm still working on trying to locate my parents. (But) at least the three of us are together now."

The trio set up a meeting at Stepping Stone Falls in Genesee Township, where they took their first family pictures.

Nellie's adoptive mother, who wished to be identified only as Thelma, said Nellie still may not completely understand that the young men are her birth brothers.

"She likes people and she likes lots of attention," Thelma said. "After she met them, I asked her about her new brothers and she said no, they're her new friends. I think after spending time around them, she'll come around."

David also finds the family resemblance interesting.

"The funny thing is, people always thought Michael and I were twins, and because of his impairment they thought I was the oldest," he said. "Now we all look alike."

While Michael, David and Nellie struggled to find each other, a new Genesee County Department of Human Services program is making sure adopted siblings stay connected.

The Family to Family Initiative, which mainly emphasizes keeping foster kids in touch with their families, kicked off at Mott Children's Health Center on Wednesday.

"You want to keep that sibling connection," said Sheryl Thompson, DHS director for Genesee County. "That's all they have sometimes, and we encourage it. We try to keep siblings connected, even if they're in different homes."

Reuniting with their sister has renewed the brothers' urge to find their birth parents.

In the meantime, Michael is doing something he's never done before: searching for a gift for Nellie's birthday, her 26th.

"I don't know whether to get jewelry or dolls," Michael said. "I may even dress up for the occasion."

Nellie's party is a family milestone for the three.

"It's nice that it all worked out, us running into each other the way we did," David said.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Relatives who take senior citizens' cash are committing elder abuse

Sunday, October 29, 2006

By Jackie DeHaan

A trusting parent gives her adult child or grandchild an ATM card with access to her checking account. It is for emergency situations, she says. A couple of months later, the parent learns that the money has been withdrawn and there is nothing left to pay the bills.

As executive director of Guardian Finance and Advocacy Services, I routinely encounter cases like these. For some people, it is a financial catastrophe. We want senior citizens to be aware of this problem and use good judgment in whom they give access to their money and property.

Considered a form of elder abuse, relatives (or even close friends) can justify this theft in their minds as an entitlement and rightfully theirs. They may profess to love the elderly person. Commonly referred to as "predatory relatives," they may promise lifelong care in exchange for money or property, but don't deliver on their promise.

The majority of adults are responsible and take good care of their aging parents, but there are always a few who can't handle the responsibility. Every year, nationwide, hundreds of thousands of people suffer from some form of elder abuse.

The Detroit News reported last year that a Michigan State University study predicts elder abuse will double in the next 25 years.

The National Center on Elder Abuse (www.elderabusecenter.org) provides these "red flag" signs of abuse for public awareness:

- Sudden changes in bank account or banking practices, including an unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money by a person accompanying the elder.
- Adding additional names on an elder's bank signature card.
- Unauthorized withdrawal of the elder's money using his or her ATM card.
- Abrupt changes in a will or other financial documents.
- Unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions.
- Substandard care being provided or bills unpaid despite the availability of sufficient money.
- Discovery that an elder's signature has been forged for financial transactions.
- Sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives who claim their rights to an elder's affairs and possessions.
- Unexplained sudden transfer of assets to a family member or someone outside the family.
- Providing services that are not necessary.

When elder abuse is suspected, Guardian recommends calling Adult Protective Services at 337-5046 in

Kalamazoo County. More information is available at their Web site:
<http://www.kalcounty.com/aaa/elderabuse.html>.

In Calhoun County, the number to call is 211. If you are a cell phone user, 211 can be accessed in the Battle Creek area by calling (269) 565-4159 or, outside Battle Creek, 1(800) 250-5628. Both organizations have 24-hour, seven-day-a-week phone services.

Formerly known as Guardian Inc., the mission of Guardian Finance and Advocacy Services is to provide help to persons with limited skills, opportunities and other vulnerabilities. This service is intended to promote independence and economic self-sufficiency using available community resources.

Jackie DeHaan is the executive director of Guardian Finance and Advocacy Services.

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Easing the transition

— Adrian's school for troubled girls and women prepares a new program to help residents after their release.

By James Rufus Koren

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN — The Adrian Training School is starting a new transitional program and got a helping hand Friday from DaimlerChrysler Financial Services, as 35 of the company's employees showed up to paint and decorate the program's new facility and brought along a check for \$10,000.



The Adrian Training School, with some help from DaimlerChrysler Financial Services, is launching a new transitional program. Thirty-five DaimlerChrysler employees, including Judy Randle, came to Adrian on Friday to help prepare a building for the program. — Telegram photo by Mike Calamungi

The new transitional program, scheduled to start in December, will aim to help girls and women from the training school get out into the community and learn life and job skills along the way. Participants in the program will live in a separate residence hall that features apartment-style, independent living, rather than the school's typical dormitories.

The training school, a state Bureau of Juvenile Justice facility for girls and women ages 12 to 21, offers treatment for about 60 women referred by circuit and family courts throughout Michigan.

After finishing at the training school, residents often go to transitional programs or independent-living centers in other parts of the state. Sandra Bow, the school's director, said the new ATS program will make the school a "wrap-around service," giving women stability as they leave the school and re-enter the community.

"They typically would be returned to their homes or some other facility that has a supervised, independent-living program," Bow said. "What I'm saying to the court is there's an option for these girls. What better place to keep the kids than where you know them? It gives them an optimum chance of success because we know them."

Jennifer Williams, the school's transition coordinator, said the program will stress independent life skills.

"It's apartment-style living; they'll be working and going to school off-grounds, they'll be cooking for themselves," she said. "It's not only educating them with life skills, but allowing them to practice them."

Williams said she will work with local businesses and organizations, such as the Salvation Army, CVS Pharmacy, Bixby Medical Center and the Daily Bread of Lenawee soup kitchen, to help provide jobs and service opportunities to women in the program.

"We're providing them opportunities to get exposure, to have opportunities within this community, to gain some skills to take back to their own community or, better yet, to stay in Adrian," Bow said. "If we don't prepare them here, where will they get those opportunities?"

Along with working and volunteering, women in the transitional program will be expected to take classes at

Jackson Community College, the Lenawee Intermediate School District's Vo-Tech Center or even at ATS itself.

"If the need be that you stay here and get academic services here, then so be it, but we'd like to have them enroll in programs across the street," Bow said.

Another facet of the new program is a partnership with DaimlerChrysler Financial Services, which Williams said will provide mentoring and educational opportunities as well as financial and volunteer support.

DCFS employees arrived at the ATS campus Friday morning and painted the rooms in the new transitional residence hall, christened as the Cynthia Gray Transition Hall in honor of one of the school's long-time volunteers.

Paul Knauss, DCFS' chief operating officer, presented Williams, Bow and other school officials with a check for \$10,000, which will be used to purchase furnishings, bedding and other amenities for the hall.

"The idea is to personalize the rooms," Bow said. "We want to make the girls feel like they're not in an institution."

Williams said DCFS employees will return to the transitional program to hold workshops on topics like personal finance and financial literacy.

"We want to help women develop the skills necessary to enter into the corporate world," said Monique Tate, co-chair of community relations for the DCFS Women's Forum. "We want to show them there are strong, professional women they can use as role models."

Williams said the program's capacity will be 12 women — the residence hall has 12 bedrooms — but that it may start out with fewer students.

"We'd rather be successful with a smaller number at first," she said.

Bow said the women in the program will be the "cream of the crop," and that the expanded freedoms of the transitional program will be met with high expectations.

"This is about taking care of your business up here, and making attainable goals for the future," Bow said. "Two strikes and you are out of the program. If you can't do those things, you will go back directly to the ATS campus."

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Finding their way: ChalleNGe Academy sets most grads on path to success

By Susan Vela
Lansing State Journal

Donald Kachur had nothing to lose when he volunteered for a stint at the Michigan Youth ChalleNGe Academy five years ago.

Skippping classes, school suspensions, vandalizing property, ... he was bound for trouble. In contrast, the academy's sobering rigors presented a final chance to shape up his life.

With grit and stamina, Kachur graduated from the National Guard's unique paramilitary school. He put in the study hours; he marched and ran the requisite miles.

"It got me on the right track," said Kachur, now 22, who has served in the U.S. Air Force and the war in Afghanistan since leaving the academy.

He's among more than 1,000 at-risk youths the academy has transformed into hard-bodied, studious cadets since its 1999 inception.

Academy officials say 90 percent became productive citizens by joining the work force, signing up for the military or attending college.

For Kachur, getting by hasn't been particularly easy. He's making about \$13 an hour at a factory job, living with his parents and facing a probable layoff. But, for him, the future looks a whole lot brighter as an academy grad.

"I really don't know where I'd be at if I hadn't gone," Kachur said. "I don't think I would have had the discipline. I kind of owe that to the academy."



(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)
"Right track": Donald Kachur, 22, walks Friday near his family's home in Charlotte. A Michigan Youth ChalleNGe Academy graduate, he credits the experience for "putting him on the right track."

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- [Battle Creek considering new site for academy](#)

Slipping back

Five years ago, Michael Sigler was in peak physical condition at the tail end of the academy's 5 1/2-month residential program.

Academically, he was testing at more than an 11th-grade level, which was a huge achievement since he started the academy with scores indicating a seventh-grader's learning capabilities.

"I find that remarkable," said his Lansing Township father, Ken.

Michael, though, didn't thrive upon graduation. Then 16, he didn't go back to school and didn't find a job. The military wasn't an option because of his age.

Michael Sigler slipped, opting for the easier route of crime. He was sentenced in June to three to five years in prison on home invasion charges.

His father recently talked about the academy.

"That environment was the only one that my son excelled in," Ken Sigler said. "He knows (that) with better choices - not choosing the easier, softer way - he can excel."

Skills for success

The academy teaches cadets everything needed for success, including how to attain a high school diploma or its equivalent, budget their money, find a job or a suitable college, and volunteer for community service.

Graduates such as Harrison Garcia, who went through the program in 2001, soaked up the knowledge and soared.

After the academy, he returned to Iron Mountain in the Upper Peninsula. He worked two years at a lumber mill and then enrolled in college.

He's now bent on pursuing certification as a paramedic at Wayne County Community College. He hopes to make about \$45,000 a year.

"It's something I've wanted for so long," said Garcia, 21, of Southgate. And, "it gets easier."

He offers advice to the 93 cadets just six weeks from graduating as part of the academy's 15th class.

"Make sure you get that GED. You're not going to get anywhere without an education," he said.

That's coming from a man once kicked out of Iron Mountain schools.

Graduation benefits

Without any drill instructors yelling in her ear, single mom Tabetha Acre, 22, can laugh about her stay at the academy.

"They seriously made a woman out of me," said Acre, from Twin Lakes near Muskegon.

Acre's proud to live in a duplex with a heckuva long driveway with her 4-month-old daughter. She makes a living by tending bar for war veterans.

"The tips are really good," she said. "I'm getting by."

"At least I'm taking care of my daughter."

Another 2001 graduate, Jason Sholtz said he's making \$64,000 a year while traveling the country to install conveyor systems. He's in the process of buying more than 100 acres near Brant, where he grew up.

"At the academy, they taught you a lot of self discipline (and) motivation to make yourself better, basically, to do whatever you wanted to do," the 22-year-old said.

Good work habits

William Young was 15 and thinking he was cool when a knife fell out of his backpack during a bus ride to Grand Ledge High School.

He was expelled and, during the height of zero tolerance debates, no school but the academy would accept him.

He now has a full-time job at a Meijer warehouse in Delta Township. And he's taking classes at Lansing Community College so he can open his own restaurant or become a sous chef.

He credits the academy for some of his best career traits.

"I wouldn't be who I am today without the academy," the 21-year-old said.

"I'm a hard worker. I know self worth. I also know without working as a team you can't get anything done.

"They did as much as they could."

- From staff writer Susan Vela

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Commissioners recommend new location for Kent Co. Dept. of Human Services

Updated: Oct 30, 2006 08:05 AM EST

GRAND RAPIDS -- The next step toward a new home for the Department of Human Services building in Grand Rapids took place Thursday morning.

Kent County Commissioners gave their recommendation on the lease agreement to move the building, currently at the corner of Madison and Franklin SE, to the nearby Sheldon Complex at Franklin and Jefferson SE.

The issue now goes to the Board of Commissioners for its review.

State Representative Jerry Kooiman (R-Grand Rapids) has helped put together meetings between the county and state. "It's a win-win-win for everyone. I'm very pleased even though it's taken a long time to come. We're getting movement on the new Department of Human Services in Grand Rapids," he says.

The project still needs more approval, including acquiring \$27 million in bonds by the Board of Commissioners.



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Warm the Children faces a big demand

Sunday, October 29, 2006

By Josh Jarman

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Every year hundreds of Jackson-area children receive winter clothing their families could not otherwise afford through the Warm the Children campaign.

The need is so great this year, however, that organizers fear not everyone who qualifies will receive protection from the cold.

More than 1,300 children have signed up, about 500 more than a typical year. That means the program, which started in 1998, needs more donations and volunteers than ever before.

"There has been a tremendous amount of job loss this year," said Shannon Marks, information specialist with the Community Action Agency. "Many of our families are working for such a low wage they are not able to make ends meet."

Marks said the agency approved everyone who met income requirements and was not part of last year's program during two signup days at Lincoln School this month.

"We let all the families we work with know about the program," Marks said. "That way we can truly help the families that need it the most."

The campaign is sponsored by the Citizen Patriot, the Community Action Agency and the Jackson Junior Welfare League. In partnership with Meijer Inc., the campaign has provided warm winter clothing for more than 6,100 local children since its inception nine years ago.

"It's going pretty well, but we still need a lot of volunteers," said Kris Ann Kraeuter, campaign co-chair at the Junior Welfare League. "We started early so we hope kids can have warm clothes before the end of December."

Kraeuter said many volunteers shop for more than one family, helping as many as 10 children each.

"It's a very rewarding experience, and very eye-opening," Kraeuter said. "We don't want to see anyone left out because of a shortage of shoppers."

Karen Dod, the league's other campaign coordinator, said the high number of applicants has her concerned the campaign won't raise enough money to clothe all the children in need. Last year the campaign raised \$64,000.

"Everyone is getting hit right now," Dod said. "Last year Katrina was definitely a factor in giving. This year it is the economic situation in Michigan. You can see it in the number of kids."

Dod was hopeful that the community would rise to the challenge.

"With children, people tend to be a little more giving," she said.

Stacie Behler, corporate spokeswoman for Meijer, which kick-started the campaign this year with a \$10,000 donation, said the program was "an absolute investment in meeting the needs of the children of Michigan."

Behler said the extra effort stores have to go through, including special checkout procedures for the tax-free purchases, don't compare to what the employees get out of the event.

"It's their community," Behler said. "They look forward to it and embrace it."

Citizen Patriot Editor Eileen Lehnert said it is amazing how the community responds to the program.

"This is such a giving community," Lehnert said. "There's no other way to put it. When times are tough, people dig even deeper because they know there are people worse off than they are."

Lehnert, who has volunteered for the event in the past, said watching children get excited about a pair of socks is a heartwarming experience.

"The Citizen Patriot is proud to be a part of this program," Lehnert said. "We can donate our talent to help needy kids by partnering with each and every person in Jackson. It's a great community effort."

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